

USDA news

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

USDA's Proposed Budget For FY 2007 Emphasizes Priorities, Fiscal Discipline

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

Noting that USDA will be a team player in producing not only savings that will help reduce the federal deficit and strengthen the economy but also reforms that will improve the Department's programs, Secretary **Mike Johanns** unveiled USDA's proposed budget for FY 2007 at a press conference on February 6 at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

"These proposals are made in the spirit that everybody has to contribute to deficit reduction," he said.

"Every federal department is going to be asked and has been asked to do their share," Johanns added. "Again, if we don't get the deficit under control it's hard to imagine that there's a good future out there in agriculture. The two don't work together—high deficits and the future of agriculture. It's not a fit. We've got to deal with the deficit."

USDA's FY 2007 proposed budget calls for nearly \$92.8 billion in spending. This represents a slight decline from the Department's currently estimated spending for FY 2006 of approximately \$95.7 billion. Johanns said that the two main reasons for the reductions are (1) the assumption that USDA will not need the emergency

disaster assistance funding and other emergency supplemental funds that were needed in 2006, and (2) because of budget reductions being proposed, which include some legislative changes.

USDA's budget proposes a federal staffing level for FY 2007 of 99,106 full-time equivalent positions, or federal staff years. This is a decrease of 985 federal staff years from the currently estimated FY 2006 federal staff year level of 100,091.

Agencies that reflect proposed increases in federal staff years for FY 2007 include the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (an increase of 608 federal staff years, to total 7,616 federal staff years), the Food and Nutrition Service (35, to total 1,465), the Office of Inspector General (21, to total 660), the National Agricultural Statistics Service (16, to total 1,139), and the Risk Management Agency (15, to total 568).

Agencies with proposed decreases in federal staff years include the Natural Resources Conservation Service (a decrease of 1,539 federal staff years, to total 10,967 federal staff years), the Forest Service (74, to total 36,411), and the Farm Service Agency (65, to total 5,253).

In addition, the non-federal
continued on pg. 2...



FNS's **Heather Hopwood** (right) initiates the "rub belly" component of the numerous dance moves which mesh with lyrics to a song being called out by FNS's **Judy Wilson** (far left). They, and students (center, background) from a "step team" at a Washington, DC middle school, are accompanying FNS mascot **Power Panther** (center) as he moves to the beat of a new song titled "Eat Smart, Play Hard." That's also the name of FNS's campaign to encourage youngsters to make healthy food choices and be physically active. This was the first time that Power Panther has utilized dance movements to go along with song lyrics. Note the story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY AILEO WEINMANN**

Here's How We're Preparing Our USDA Workplace For The Possibility Of Pandemic Avian Influenza

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

USDA has been a vital part of the ongoing federal efforts to prepare for the possibility of a "pandemic," or a global outbreak of influenza virus to which most people have little or no immunity. Because of the global nature of this threat, in this country, USDA planners are helping to get the USDA workplace more resilient to any potential outbreak of influenza that may occur in the U.S. What follows is a focus on those 'workplace-based' efforts.

But before going into detail

about what USDA is doing and recommending internally, it is important to define avian influenza and provide a status report.

"First and foremost, we are not, at this point, experiencing a pandemic among humans," emphasized **Ron DeHaven**, administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"Avian flu might be the source of the next pandemic," he continued. "That's important because the problem we're seeing with the H5N1 avian influenza affecting Southeast Asia, Eurasia, Africa, and Europe is sensitizing us to
continued on pg. 7...



Mike Johanns *Secretary of Agriculture*

Dear Fellow Employees, Higher energy costs have become a reality for all of us. My support for renewable fuels dates back to my days as Chairman of the Governor's Ethanol Coalition, but the current energy situation has made me aware as never before how important our work in developing renewable fuels is to our country. I'm talking about harvesting America's farm-based cash crops—corn, soybeans, sunflower seeds, canola—and other plant material and agricultural waste.

In the past two decades, corn has been the renewable energy source of choice. Ethanol production from corn last year reached a record high of four billion gallons—that's 14 percent of corn use. Because corn used for ethanol has steadily increased each year, it is now included in USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board supply and demand projections, along with exports, and feed and food use. President **George W. Bush** is right when he says that someday, a future U.S. President may ask his advisors for the crop report to assess our energy supply, instead of asking how many barrels of crude oil we are importing.

America's producers are enthusiastic supporters of this trend because it adds value to their crops and holds out the potential to reduce on-farm energy costs. Today there are 93 ethanol plants in operation in the U.S. with a production capacity of 4.2 billion gallons. Another 1.7 billion gallons of capacity are under

construction in part because the Energy Act of 2005 requires that 7.5 billion gallons of renewable fuels be used in the Nation's fuel supply by 2012.

Since 2001, the administration has invested nearly \$10 billion dollars to develop cleaner, cheaper, and more reliable alternative energy sources. In the President's budget proposal for 2007, USDA's core investment in energy-related research increases to \$85 million and we expect to provide in excess of \$250 million per year in 2006 and 2007 in rural development programs that generate increased energy supply and efficiency.

Consider that nearly 100 years ago **Henry Ford** tried to encourage ethanol use instead of gasoline, which he knew had a limited supply. But cheap gas and steep alcohol taxes worked against ethanol. Now, Ford's great-grandson, **Bill Ford**, has breathed new life into the ethanol industry by announcing plans to manufacture 250,000 cars in 2006 that can run on E-85, an ethanol-gasoline blend.

The problems that contributed to high-energy prices took decades to develop and they will take some time to correct. USDA has a huge role to play in helping agriculture and rural areas capitalize on the opportunities presented by the need for new energy sources. Our efforts, together with this administration's commitment to renewable fuels, will put us closer to realizing the President's vision of becoming less dependent on foreign sources of energy sooner rather than later. ■

USDA's Proposed Budget...continued from pg. 1

county staff years of FSA are projected to decrease by 24—reflecting program workload changes—for a total of 9,425 non-federal staff years for FY 2007.

These federal staff year estimates are all subject to adjustments to reflect the final outcome of budget negotiations, and such unpredictable factors as natural disasters and other emergencies.

Highlights of USDA's FY 2007 budget proposal, thought to be of particular interest to USDA employees, include:

❶ \$109 million for continued upgrading of technology in county office Service Centers. This provides for the continued replacement of aging business and technology systems with a Common Computing Environment (CCE) in those offices. That allows the Service Center agencies (FSA, NRCS, and Rural Development) to share data among themselves and their customers and to streamline business processes. Implementation of the CCE began in 1998 and most of its major hardware and software components are in place. This is all designed to increase the ability of USDA cus-

tomers to interact with USDA staffers over the Internet, so as to save time and money.

❷ \$22.7 million—an increase of \$2.7 million—for the Office of Civil Rights in efforts to strengthen civil rights and equal treatment in USDA programs and services. This includes additional funds to support mandatory compliance monitoring activities, plus funds to complete the civil rights complaints tracking information system used by OCR and all the agencies within USDA.

❸ \$322 million in USDA funding as part of the governmentwide "Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative" which began in 2004. USDA's contribution is to go to such activities as: strengthening the Food Emergency Response Network and the Regional Diagnostic Network to ensure the capacity to respond quickly to food emergencies and plant and animal diseases and related training; strengthening research to ensure food safety; developing the means to quickly identify pathogens; developing improved animal vaccines; better understanding the genes that provide disease resistance; and enhancing surveillance and monitoring activities to quickly detect pest

and disease threats and to improve response capabilities.

❹ \$85 million—an increase of \$18 million—in core investment in energy-related projects, including resources to support renewable energy research and demonstration projects and additional efforts to support energy development and transmission across public lands.

❺ \$82 million in avian influenza efforts, in which USDA continues to work closely with states in domestic surveillance efforts and improves the nation's preparedness and response capabilities to help stem the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) overseas. USDA is a partner in the governmentwide effort to prepare the country for a potential pandemic, and the worldwide effort to stop the spread of the virus overseas.

For more details on USDA's proposed staffing levels, as well as additional details on other aspects of USDA's proposed budget for FY 2007, click on www.usda.gov/budget.xml

USDA's proposed budget for FY 2007 was transmitted to Congress on February 6. ■

Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

Three weeks into the New Year Japan, once again, closed its market to U.S. beef. A shipment of rack of veal with backbone attached caused the shutdown. Although the meat was perfectly safe, under the U.S. agreement no vertebral column can be included in exports destined for Japan. Secretary **Mike Johanns** has made reopening that market a top priority. Meantime, Canada and Japan reported new cases of BSE and Mexico, Taiwan, and Singapore opened their markets to U.S. beef. Previously, Mexico had not accepted U.S. bone-in beef.

Agricultural Outlook Forum:

In mid-February about 1,500 people heard Secretary Johanns expand on this year's Agricultural Outlook Forum theme 'Prospering in Rural America.' He told the audience about the near unanimous support of rural development programs heard throughout the nation at the Farm Bill Forums, and he outlined the changing rural economy and what that might mean for future farm policy.

"Today about 160,000 farm households are responsible for 75 percent of all cash receipts. In 1987 that number was nearly double with about 295,000 farm households in that category. Today those 160,000 account for 33 percent of 'land in farms,' as the ag census refers to it.

"What does that tell us about what is occurring on the majority of ag land and the income source for the majority of those producers? Reality is that 92 percent of producers, those who manage about two-thirds of ag land, rely heavily on off-farm income. They choose to carry on the great tradition of American agriculture, but they

do not depend on it as their sole source of income or in many cases even as their primary source as income.

"We have an opportunity to develop farm policy that recognizes that this farm economy has changed. With fewer producers overall and the majority of farm production accounted for by a small percentage of producers, we must thoughtfully consider how we deliver support to rural America," he said.

Renewable Energy And Energy Efficiency:

Agricultural producers and small rural businesses can apply for \$176.5 million in loan guarantees and almost \$11.4 million in grants to support investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements, the Secretary announced at the 11th annual National Ethanol Conference. The program is part of the 2002 Farm Bill. Since it began 435 grants totaling \$66.7 million have been awarded in 36 states. A loan guarantee, made for the first time in 2005, combined with a Business and Industry guarantee helped build a 20-megawatt biomass electrical generating plant in Arizona. The plant uses wildfire-damaged timber and waste from a nearby paper mill as a fuel source.



Secretary **Mike Johanns** (2nd from left) smiles as he holds a folder which contains several checks—one group in the sum of \$7,000 for the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund, and another in the sum of \$500 for the Embassy of Pakistan to use in that country's Earthquake Relief Fund. The money represents contributions from four USDA employee organizations, represented by **Farook Sait** (left), president of the Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; **Arun Basu** (2nd from right), an executive board member of the Asian Pacific Islander Organization; and **Talari Jude**, president of the Organization of South Asian Americans in Agriculture. Not present but also contributing was **Keith Prue**, president of USDA's chapter of Blacks in Government.—**PHOTO BY STERLING AUGUST**

Safeguarding The Nation's Food Supply:

The Food Safety and Inspection Service will conduct several food defense exercises this year. The first exercise took place in Alameda, Calif., in mid-January. All are designed to practice reporting non-routine incidents and how program offices would manage an emergency. The second day's activities focus on product recall and health and communications issues. In addition, FSIS will test its ability to coordinate with local and state departments of health and agriculture, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Food and Drug Administration, as well as the affected industries. Additional food defense exercises are planned for March 22-23 in Raleigh, N.C.; May 17-18 in Chicago, Ill.; July 19-20 in Minneapolis, Minn.; and Sept. 20-21 in Albany, N.Y. In time, FSIS will conduct similar exer-

cises in all 15 FSIS regional district offices.

National Food Check-Out Week:

Secretary Johanns designated Jan. 29-Feb. 4, 2006 as National Food Check-Out Week, a consumer education project of the American Farm Bureau Federation Women's Leadership Committee. As he signed the proclamation Johanns said, "On average, each American earns enough income to pay for his or her annual food supply in just 35 calendar days or five weeks. Our nation's food supply is the most affordable in the world, with American consumers typically spending 9.5 percent of their annual disposable income on food. American producers are providing the safest, most abundant food supply in the world and doing it on less acreage than ever before."

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

Employees *make these things happen*

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

Groovin' And Dancin' To FNS's Health And Fitness Message

Is **Power Panther** about to go on "American Idol?" Or maybe compete as a contestant on "Dancing With The Stars?"

Perhaps he should, because now he's become a rock idol—well, sort of—in addition to all his other talents. And that helps Food and Nutrition Service staffers to promote, even further, their message about healthy dieting and exercise.

According to **Judy Wilson**, director of FNS's Nutrition Services Staff, "Power Panther" is an FNS mascot—a blue panther who wears a T-shirt emblazoned with the message "Eat Smart, Play Hard." "Power Panther encourages youngsters to make healthy food choices and be physically active—and he delivers those messages with fun and in a non-threatening way," she said.

Created in 1999, FNS's Power Panther typically appears at school events around the country, as well as at health-oriented conferences and area community activities, plus at activities during National Nutrition Month in March. "Power Panther doesn't talk," Wilson clarified. "But, as the 'spokescharacter' for our 'Eat Smart, Play Hard' campaign, he gets his message across by movements and gestures designed to engage kids and adults

in nutrition- and fitness-oriented actions."

Then in January 2006 FNS nutritionist **Heather Hopwood** came up with the idea of creating a revised "Eat Smart, Play Hard" song for Power Panther. "My colleague, FNS nutritionist **Donna Johnson-Bailey**, had coordinated the development of two songs which Power Panther has used in the past," she said. "But this is the first song that has dance movements to go with the lyrics."

Hopwood and FNS nutritionist **Ebony Horry** wrote four stanzas worth of lyrics and then added dance moves such as "cross hands in front," "rub belly," "jazz hands in air," "bicep curls," and "shake entire body up and down." "You might call it a cross between the macarena, the hitchhike, and the swim," Hopwood quipped.

The rhythmic lyrics include such lines as "*Nothing beats/Eating smart/It's good for your head./And good for your heart./Hands up high./Feet down low./Shake your body./Don't move too slow!*"

The new song and dance debuted on January 14 in Washington, DC, at a "Health and Fitness Expo" sponsored by a local TV station. Power Panther launched into his new routine, accompanied by Wilson on the microphone reciting the lyrics, Hopwood aiding in the dance moves, and seven members

of a local middle school's "step team," dressed in black, garbed in whiskers and tails, for their 'dance and step' performance.

"Power Panther rocked the house, and he had the audience on its feet, grooving to the lyrics," Hopwood noted. The FNS mascot plans to continue performing his new song and dance at events around the country.

Just one question: If Power Panther *does* make it onto "American Idol," what's "Idol" judge **Simon Cowell** going to say? One can only imagine. . .

—**RON HALL**



"Nothing beats/Playing hard/At home, at school/Or in the yard," FNS's **Judy Wilson** (left, with microphone) intones to a musical beat—while FNS's **Heather Hopwood** (right) and **Power Panther** (center) demonstrate the "bicep curl" dance step.—**PHOTO BY AILEO WEINMANN**

Research, Education, and Economics

The Nutrient Punch In Pumpkin: Now We Can Measure It Better

Mention "pumpkins" and your first thought might be of a rich, creamy pumpkin pie, still warm from the oven and topped with a dollop of chilled whipped cream. But there's actually a serious side to this jolly member of the squash family.

Canned pumpkin probably provides more of a nutrient called "beta-carotene" than any other food in your cupboard. Until now, however, there hasn't been a fast, simple, and environmentally friendly way to precisely measure the beta-carotene—and its carotenoid relatives—in pumpkin.

Staffers with the Agricultural Research Service recently filled that technology gap—and here's why that's important.

Betty Burri, an ARS research chemist based at ARS's Western Human Nutrition Research Center in Davis, Calif., said our bodies can convert beta-carotene, in food,

into vitamin A—a nutrient essential for good eyesight and proper growth. "Beta-carotene and some other carotenoids," she explained, "are thought to help reduce the incidence of cataracts, cardiovascular disease, and particular kinds of cancer."

So who would want to know precisely how much beta-carotene or other carotenoids are in pumpkins? "Plant breeders trying to develop superior pumpkins in the future could use that information when they're evaluating their most promising new pumpkins," Burri said.

And why, in turn, is *that* helpful, above and beyond making for an even healthier pumpkin pie to devour at Thanksgiving?

Burri said better pumpkins could be especially helpful to people living in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, or South and Central America where vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of preventable blindness and a major cause of infant deaths. "Although

fresh mangoes—also rich in beta-carotene—are promoted in some nutrition programs in those areas," Burri said, "they're only available as a fresh product in the spring and summer. They don't ship very well and have a relatively short shelf life."

Although foods like liver, whole milk, and eggs provide vitamin A to the body with no need for beta-carotene conversion, those foods are usually more expensive than locally grown pumpkins.

So pumpkins, which are typically harvested in the fall and early winter, might help fill the nutrition gap when mangoes are out of season. "Pumpkins store well and don't require the refrigeration that's simply too costly for millions of people," Burri explained. "And pumpkins are easy to grow."

The study that Burri and ARS biologist **Terry Neidlinger** conducted, along with **Jung Sook Seo** and **Zhejiu Quan** of Yeungnam University in South Korea, em-

Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



Chuck Christopherson is USDA's Chief Financial Officer.

Before joining USDA, from August 2003 until his confirmation by the U.S. Senate for this position Christopherson served as co-founder and president of CB Solutions, LLC, a Dallas, Texas-based "turnaround" consulting firm which helps reorganize financially stressed companies. From 2001-03 he was group vice-president for operations and finance with Encompass Services Corp., a Houston-based firm which operated as a consolidator of construction and facilities services nationwide.

From 2000-2001 Christopherson served as the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer for Lantech, an Englewood, Colo.-based technology company. He worked to turn that financially-stressed firm around, after having performed that same function from 1998-2000 as the CFO for ICG Fiber Optic Technologies in Englewood. While based in Portland, Ore., from 1996-98 he worked for Comshare, consulting to Fortune 500 companies nationwide. From 1991-96 he

supervised consolidation and financial reporting for Vancouver, Wash.-based Pacific Telecom, which at the time was the largest rural telecommunications provider in the country. He is a Certified Public Accountant licensed in the state of Washington.

Ted McPherson, USDA's previous CFO, has since returned to InterSolve Group, Inc., where he is once again serving as its Chief Executive Officer, and where he had worked before joining USDA in October 2001. ■



Jim Andrew is the administrator of the Rural Utilities Service.

Before joining USDA, from January 1999 until his confirmation by the U.S. Senate for this position Andrew served as a consultant, based in Millen, Ga., focusing on rural electric cooperatives and construction. From 1978 until he sold the firm in 1999 he was the owner of BAS Inc., an agricultural irrigation and steel buildings firm based in Waynesboro, Ga. During much of that time, and starting in 1968, he also helped run a family farm, located in Jenkins County, Ga., which grew pecans, corn, and soybeans.

From 1972 until forming BAS Inc., Andrew worked in Millen as a regional marketing manager for an Atlanta-based electrical distribution equipment manufacturing company. In 1972 he also helped start a community bank in Millen. He worked from 1968-72 in Millen as the marketing manager for the Georgia Electric Membership Corporation (EMC), which is the statewide trade association representing Georgia's 42 rural electric cooperatives.

Andrew was a member of the board of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association from 1988-2004, and served as its president from 1999-2000. Concurrently, during 1999-2000 he served on the board of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, a financing cooperative of the rural electric and telephone cooperatives nationwide. Previously, for 25 years from 1976-2001 he was a board member and/or an officer with the Jefferson Energy Cooperative in Wrens, Ga.

Hilda Legg, the previous administrator of RUS, is now residing in Somerset, Ky., where she is a consultant and a public speaker focusing on telecommunications matters and economic development in rural areas. ■



Sue Murrin is the assistant inspector general for policy development and resources management in the Office of Inspector General.

Before joining USDA, from June 1999 until her selection for this position Murrin served as director of the Audit Planning, Training, and Technical Support Division within the Office of Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Transportation. She was a management analyst for the Office of Management and Budget, focusing on inspector general issues governmentwide, from 1991-99. From 1987-91 she was a policy analyst in OIG at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where she focused on nationwide IG inspections that examined such issues as welfare-to-work programs.

Murrin worked as a buyer in the Purchasing Agent's Division for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from 1985-87.

Paula Hayes, the previous assistant inspector general for policy development and resources management in OIG, is now the assistant inspector general for management at the U.S. Agency for International Development. ■

...continued from pg. 4

ployed a process known as "supercritical fluid extraction," or SFE, to efficiently draw out significant amounts of carotenoids from pumpkin samples. "We paired that process with one called 'reversed-phase liquid chromatography,' to identify and measure the extracted compounds," Burri said.

She pointed out that the SFE process doesn't require harsh chemicals that can be a problem to dispose of properly or that can alter the beta-carotene and other carotenoids, thus skewing the test results. "Plus," she said, "processing our samples this way doesn't require a 12-hour wait, as can happen with an alternative approach."

"All this makes our approach a much better choice than today's other options."

She said the test's paired techniques aren't new. For example, one technique has been used for decades to remove caffeine from coffee beans. "But we're pretty sure we're the first to apply these techniques, the way we did, to measure beta-carotene and other carotenoids in pumpkins."

"We're hoping the ease, speed, and precision of our technique will quicken the development of new, super-healthy pumpkins here in the U.S. and around the world."

So an end result, in America, of this research could be that the canned pumpkin you buy in the future may pack a nutrition

punch that's more powerful than ever.

—**MARCIA WOOD**



ARS's Betty Burri gets ready to place a cartridge of homogenized, freeze-dried pumpkin samples into a "supercritical fluid extractor" to more precisely measure the amount of the nutrient "beta-carotene" in those samples.—**PHOTO BY PEGGY GREB**



So, you recently made some New Year's Resolutions, right? And perhaps they dealt with

losing weight, pumping more iron, shifting careers, getting married, getting divorced—whatever.

David Anderson's New Year's Resolution—last year—was: "I'm going to start a symphony."

Anderson, a Forest Service forest information manager on the Big Horn National Forest in Sheridan, Wyo., moved to Sheridan in April 2003. He is a violin player and had played in local symphonies in three towns in the Northwest from 1999-2002.

"Sheridan is a city of about 17,000 people," he said, "but it didn't have a symphony. So I thought, 'Hey, maybe there's enough people here to start one—and maybe I can be the

one to make it happen.'"

Accordingly, in January 2005 Anderson methodically put up posters in local businesses around Sheridan, went on local radio shows to talk up the idea and promote the organizational meeting he had scheduled about this initiative, and bought a 2" x 2" ad in the "*Sheridan Press*" newspaper. "That cost me \$50, so I figured there was no backing out now," he laughed.

Over the next few weeks, he received several phone calls and e-mails—and, on Feb. 23, 2005, the date of the meeting, 15 people showed up. "I thought this would be the first of several organizational meetings," he said. "But most attendees said 'let's start playing right away!'"

"Oh crud," he recalled muttering. "I didn't think I'd laid out enough groundwork, but we *did* start rehearsing right away."

So, just how *does* one start a

symphony from scratch?

"Well, we relied on the kindness of strangers a lot," Anderson quipped. "We borrowed sheet music from the local high school, and the local community college provided us with its band room for rehearsals. But all our participants already had their own instruments—so at least we were pretty self-sufficient on that score."

Participants now numbered 32, including 8 violinists, 3 viola players, 3 cellists, 2 bass players, 3 flutists, 2 oboists, 1 clarinetist, 3 French horn players, 2 trumpeters, 2 trombonists, 1 percussionist, 1 kettle drum player, and a conductor. The group includes **Anna Jones-Crabtree**, an oboist who is also the Forest Service forest engineer on the Big Horn National Forest.

"We're all volunteers; we don't get paid," Anderson pointed out.

Anderson decided to call the group the "Cloud Peak Sympho-

ny." According to **Frances Reynolds**, a legislative affairs coordinator at the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Lakewood, Colo., Cloud Peak is the name of the tallest mountain peak in the Big Horn National Forest—which is the dominant physical feature in northeast Wyoming.

The group's first public gig? "We ended up playing at the wedding of **Mara Bruso**, one of our violinists," Anderson said. "And since we were untested, I said to her, 'You sure about this?' and she said 'Yup'." "And no, she didn't play in the symphony that day," he laughed. "Obviously, she was focusing on other things."

During 2005 the Cloud Peak Symphony played five concerts, which included the outdoor wedding and another outdoor concert, a concert held in a local high school in Buffalo, Wyo., in a park *continued on pg. 7...*

PROFILE PLUS *More About: Harold "Bruno" Mangum*



At last count USDA consisted of 102,800 employees—full-time, part-time, and temporary—located at headquarters and field offices and at agricultural posts around the world. All 102,800 of us no doubt want to leave some sort of positive legacy during our tenure with the Department.

Harold "Bruno" Mangum has had over 69 years to develop an extended legacy—because, as of February 9, 2006 he has logged 69 years and eight months of federal service. With the exception of one year in the military, all of that time has been with USDA. In fact, for the last several years he has been considered to be the USDA employee with the longest years of full-time federal service currently employed at the Department.

Mangum is a communications coordinator with the Farm Service Agency's state office in Raleigh, N.C. And when you ask him, "How you doin', Mister Mangum?" he'll combine his quick wit with his rich Southern drawl and reply, "Well, ah'm alive and kickin'—although ah'm just not kickin' as high as ah used to."

Mangum was born in Wake Forest, N.C., on Dec. 18, 1916, which means he recently turned 89. He grew up helping out on both the family farm and the family cotton gin in Wake Forest. He briefly attended [then] Wake Forest College, at the time located in Wake Forest, N.C., before beginning his career with USDA on June 9, 1936 as a supply clerk with USDA's [then] Agricultural Adjustment Administration, in Raleigh. When he started at the Department **FDR** was still in his first term as president and **Henry Agard Wallace** was secretary of agriculture.

When asked whether—in 1936—he had thought he'd stay for long at USDA, Mangum replied, "Not very long—because I'd planned to finish college once I got some money. But times were tough, and I ultimately got married, so college didn't happen."

In 1945, while a program assistant with AAA in Raleigh, Mangum was drafted—and spent his entire year on active duty as a sailor at the Naval Training Station at Bainbridge, Md., making \$21 a month. "My tour of duty was short—but not short enough!" he quipped.

In 1946 Mangum returned to the AAA state office in Raleigh as a crop insurance specialist. In the ensuing 60 years he has worked mostly as a conservation specialist, and currently works as a communications coordinator, which includes responsibility for the FSA State employee news publication and other USDA program-oriented newsletters for FSA's customers in the state.

Mangum noted that to date he has amassed more than 6,200 hours of sick leave. "I stay healthy," he laughed, "by eating a lot of frosted flakes—with peaches, pears, and bananas in milk—for breakfast."

When asked for anecdotes from his USDA career, he quipped, "The stories I'd love to tell had better never appear in print."

Finally, one is compelled to ask: "Mister Mangum, do you have plans to retire?"

"Not right now," he replied.

Last Book Read: "*Tales from the Wake Forest University Hardwood*," by **Dan Collins**

Last Movie Seen: "*The Sound of Music*"—back in 1965. "I guess you could say I don't go to movies too much; I spend a lot of my spare time following sports."

Hobbies: "Reading, talking, and watching sports on TV—I mean, look at all the good teams we have here in Raleigh!"

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: Frosted flakes cereal with peaches, pears, and bananas mixed in the bowl.

Priorities In The Months Ahead: "I want to keep being the best I can be for my FSA office here in Raleigh—and I want to keep getting out informative information, including getting out our FSA State Employee Newsletter every month to our employees, and our retirees, located around North Carolina."

—**RON HALL**

in Sheridan, and one in a local historic theater.

The group played classical symphonies, concentrating on music from such composers as **Ludwig von Beethoven, Franz Schubert, and Edvard Grieg.**

Which concert was the most memorable?

"Well, certainly the wedding concert," An-

derson hastened to underscore. "But also our first concert in the park. It was August, and it poured buckets of rain just before we were due to start. The storm came, it drenched us, then it passed and the crowds showed up—and we started out with our first piece of music which I had deliberately

selected: 'Morning Mood' by Grieg."

"That concert lasted about an hour, and, given all the rain that had fallen, I was pleased that virtually all the attendees stayed until the end—and then they gave us a big round of much-appreciated applause." ■

—**RON HALL**

Workplace...continued from pg. 1

the possibility of a worldwide pandemic influenza outbreak—which we are *not* yet facing, but recognize that we *could* face."

Avian influenza is a disease caused by a virus that infects domestic poultry, wild birds like quail, cranes, geese, and ducks, and pet birds like parrots.

DeHaven pointed out that avian influenza strains are divided into two groups: low pathogenicity and high pathogenicity. "Low pathogenic avian influenza has existed in the United States since the early 1900s and is not uncommon here," he said. "It causes some birds to become ill and can be fatal to some of them. These strains of the virus rarely pose any serious threat to human health. Highly pathogenic avian influenza is often fatal in birds and is more easily transmitted. H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza is the type currently detected in parts of Southeast Asia, Eurasia, Africa, and Europe. This strain has been transmitted to people in Southeast Asia and Eurasia, most of whom had extensive, direct contact with infected birds."

"According to the World Health Organization," DeHaven said, "as of February 20 of this year, the H5N1 virus has killed 92 people, primarily in Asia and Eurasia. The H5N1 avian influenza virus has not mutated into a sustained human-to-human form."

"However," he cautioned, "because of the sheer volume of birds infected with the H5N1 avian influenza virus in Southeast Asia and that the H5N1 avian influenza virus has persisted in poultry flocks in Southeast Asia since 2003, the possibility of the H5N1 virus mutating into a more easily transmittable human-to-human form could trigger a global pandemic. According to

the World Health Organization, there is no specific vaccine available yet to inoculate against the human-to-human transmission of the virus."

Because of the potential threat of a global avian influenza pandemic, USDA has been examining precautionary measures that could be practiced to ensure that the USDA workplace—both at field offices around the country and at headquarters—remains a healthy environment in which to work.

According to **Jim Redington**, director of emergency programs, located in the Office of Operations, the first line of defense is frequent washing of hands. "Yes, that's obvious and common sense, and maybe even falls under the category of 'DUH,'" he acknowledged. "But it's one of the most important actions that employees can take to help avoid contamination from the flu virus in our workplace."

In fact, Redington noted that this action is so important that the Department is looking at the size of its current stockpile of soap and paper towels in USDA office bathrooms at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. He said that in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak in this country, the absenteeism rate of employees at businesses in affected areas is projected at 30 to 40 percent. In turn, that would likely impact manufacturing, processing, and distribution systems for goods and services nationwide.

"So," he advised, "hygiene items we rely on in our workplace, such as soap, paper towels, and cleaning supplies, might suddenly be in short supply—and that would be compounded by the fact that everyone would be wanting those items at the same time."

"If we anticipate a high demand for those items, com-

bined with an anticipated short supply of those items, then our game plan might need to be 'If you need it, get it now'."

"So we *are* ordering those items now," he added. "Normally here at headquarters we keep a two-week supply of those hygiene items. But we're now ordering a three-month supply. And our USDA field offices might consider initiating similar measures."

He added that any momentary spike in the office budget caused by a bulk purchase like that would presumably not have a long-term effect on the office budget, since such purchasing would even out in the long run.

Jim Connor, director of OO's Beltsville Service Center in Beltsville, Md., said that, secondly, USDA is increasing the availability of antiseptic cloth wipes for use on office doorknobs, office phones, and computer keyboards, "in other words," he clarified, "anything that may be frequently shared by employees in our USDA office environment."

Third, he noted that USDA is increasing its stock of alcohol-based antiseptic gel, which is a hand-washing substance that dries quickly and requires no paper towels, and which comes in a portable container.

Related to that, Connor said, is the idea of propping open more office, hallway, and cafeteria doors so that employees wouldn't have to touch doorknobs or doorbars to open them—and thereby avoid putting their hands on yet another commonly touched fixture.

Fourth, USDA is developing guidance for its employees on "social distancing" techniques, such as more teleconferences instead of meetings in conference rooms, and more "phone business" instead of person-to-person business.

Fifth, USDA is examining current contracts in the area of janitorial cleaning services, food services, and maintenance, with an eye to developing contingencies in case those service providers are severely impacted by a global pandemic, in the event that avian influenza develops into a pandemic flu.

"Here's what that means," Redington explained. "With fewer personnel potentially providing those services due to pandemic flu, we might need to prioritize which services are more important. For instance, cleaning common areas such as cafeterias and office bathrooms will—temporarily—take priority over such services as cleaning office windows, lawn maintenance, buffing office floors, and picking up litter from office parking lots."

Sixth, **Mike O'Connor**, who is USDA's Employee Information Center "Be Prepared" webmaster, pointed out that the website—www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared—contains information on panemic avian influenza developments. This includes a link to www.PandemicFlu.gov. "That's the official U.S. government website for information on avian influenza and pandemic flu," he said. Also, information is available at www.usda.gov/birdflu.

"A 'one-size-fits-all' approach probably isn't the most effective way to approach this," Redington advised. "We're continuing to develop a wider range of options that will be appropriate for headquarters and field offices around the country, as we prepare the USDA workplace for the possibility of a pandemic."

"No one knows whether the current outbreak of avian influenza overseas will develop into a pandemic flu. But it just makes sense to be prepared." ■



As ARS's **Terry Neidlinger** holds a flask full of pumpkin pieces, his imagination may be conjuring up an image of how those chunks of pumpkin, if pureed and cooked, might taste inside a piecrust topped with whipped cream. But he's a biologist with ARS's Western Human Nutrition Research Center in Davis, Calif., so instead he's focusing on the task at

hand: to prepare the pumpkin pieces for freeze-drying, as part of an ARS study on how to precisely measure nutrients such as "beta-carotene" in pumpkin in a faster, simpler, and more environmentally friendly way. Since beta-carotene is thought to help reduce the incidence of cataracts, cardiovascular disease, and particular kinds of cancer, this research is potentially of great significance. Note **Marcia Wood's** story on page 4.—

PHOTO BY PEGGY GREB



**HELP US FIND
Cindy Elisabeth Aguirre**

Missing: **9-9-2005** From: **Los Angeles, CA**
D.O.B. **3-1-1992** Sex: **Female**
Hair: **Black** Eyes: **Brown**
Height: **5 ft. 4 in.** Weight: **120 lbs.**

If you have information, please call

1-800-843-5678

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

■ Month of March

Women's History Month

USDA headquarters and field offices

(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-6382 (TDD)

■ Month of March

National Nutrition Month

USDA headquarters and field offices

(703) 305-2298 or 1-800-877-8339 (TDD)

■ May 1-7

Public Service Recognition Week

USDA headquarters and field offices

(202) 690-4750 or 1-800-877-8339 (TDD)

U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250



OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300